

REVISED PERMANENCY PLAN GOALS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

[NOTE: As of January 2, 2008, the Department adopted the following permanency plan goals which are to be used as initial Service Plans are developed with families or as the goals of children and youth are changed for any reason. The Department anticipates that by July 1, 2008 these permanency plan goals will be in use for all families with whom it is working]

The Department seeks to achieve permanency through:

- **Stabilization of Family:** The purpose is to strengthen, support, and maintain a family's ability to provide a safe and nurturing environment for the child and prevent out-of-home placement of the child. Families who have this goal may include those situations in which a child or adolescent requires placement services for 30 calendar days or less or when longer placement is required due to her/his own developmental, medical or behavioral needs rather than concerns about abuse or neglect by her/his parents/guardians.
- **Reunification of Family:** The purpose is to reunite the child in out-of-home placement with her/his parents/guardians. Parents/guardians are expected to maintain regular and frequent contact with their child and maintain involvement in his/her educational, physical/mental health and social activities.

The Department establishes one of the following alternative plans for achieving permanency when, despite efforts to stabilize or reunify the family over a period of time, the assessed problems or needs have not been alleviated and have resulted in continued or increased risk of abuse and/or neglect to the child(ren) in the family. The end result of the following goals is to provide a child with the safest, most nurturing long term/permanent living arrangement possible.

- **Adoption:** The purpose is to prepare a child to become a permanent member of a lifelong family other than his/her birth family. Adoption is a process by which a court establishes a legal relationship of parent and child between persons who are not so related by birth, with the same mutual rights and obligations that exist between children and their birth parents. The goal of adoption does not prevent maintaining valued, lifelong connections to birth parents/siblings/kin.
- **Guardianship:** The purpose is to obtain the highest level of permanency possible for a child when reunification or adoption is not possible. The Department sponsors an individual to receive custody of a child, pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 201, who assumes authority and responsibility for the care of that child. When guardianship is identified as the goal, the best interest of the child has been considered and guardianship has been identified as the highest level of permanency appropriate for the child. The goal of guardianship does not prevent maintaining valued, lifelong connections to birth parents/siblings/kin.
- **Care with Kin:** The purpose is to provide the child with a committed, nurturing and lifelong relationship in a licensed kinship family setting. The Department defines kin as those persons related by either blood, marriage or adoption (i.e., adult sibling, grandparent, aunt, uncle, first cousin) or significant other adult to whom the child and/or parent(s) ascribe the role of family based on cultural and affectional ties. The kinship family reinforces the child's racial, ethnic, linguistic, cultural and religious heritage and strengthens and promotes continuity of familial relationships and will establish permanency for the child. DSS will continue to provide services to support the child's safety, permanency and well-being.
- **Alternative Planned Permanent Living Arrangement:** The purpose is to establish with the youth who is age 16 years or older a lifelong permanent connection, as well as life skills training and a stable living environment that will support youth development into and throughout adulthood. This goal is for youth whose best interests for achieving permanency would not be served through reunification, adoption, guardianship or care with kin. Through this goal the youth will continue to achieve the highest possible level of family connection, including physical, emotional, and legal permanence. The Department will continue to provide services and support the child's safety, permanency and well-being.